

CRIME FACTORS

Throughout the Annual Report, the Department tries to place statistics in context—to explain *why* crime occurs in a particular area, instead of just where and in how many numbers. It is quite impossible, however, to analyze every crime factor within the pages of this report. As a general rule, readers should consider the following factors when gauging the relative safety of any city, neighborhood, or business district. Most of these factors are provided by the FBI in its *Uniform Crime Reports*:

Factor	General Effect	Status in Cambridge	Effects in Cambridge
Residential Population & Population Density	High population leads to higher residential crime rate (residential burglaries, larcenies from motor vehicles, domestic assaults, auto theft). High population <i>density</i> also leads to a higher residential crime rate.	Population of about 100,000; Very high density (about 15,000 per square mile)	Higher residential crime rate than cities of fewer than 100,000 Higher residential crime rate in densely populated neighborhoods of Mid-Cambridge, North Cambridge, Cambridgeport Low residential crime rate in sparsely populated areas of Cambridge Highlands, Strawberry Hill, Agassiz
Commerical & Educational Population, number & type of commercial establishments and educational institutions	High commercial population leads to more “business” crimes (commercial burglaries, shoplifting, larcenies from buildings, forgery) and to more crimes against the person often committed in commercial areas (larcenies from the person, larcenies from motor vehicles, larcenies of bicycles, street robbery, auto theft)	Very high commercial population (many large businesses, shopping areas in Cambridge) and very high educational population (M.I.T. and Harvard).	High overall larceny rate High larceny rate in highly-populated commercial areas of East Cambridge, Harvard Square, Central Square, Porter Square, Fresh Pond Mall High auto theft rate in East Cambridge, MIT Area Low larceny, auto theft rate in Agassiz, Strawberry Hill, West Cambridge
Age composition of population	A higher population in the “at risk” age of 15–24 leads to a higher crime rate.	22 percent of the citizens of Cambridge are in the “at risk” population. However, this number is doubtlessly influenced by the high student population.	Agassiz, MIT, and Riverside have the largest percentage of people in the “at risk” ages, but most of them are college students, which somewhat decreases their chances of involvement in criminal activity. Consequently, Agassiz, MIT, and Riverside do not have higher than average crime rates. However, neighborhoods with the lowest numbers of “at risk” ages—West Cambridge, Cambridge Highlands, and Strawberry Hill— <i>do</i> experience smaller amounts of crime.
Stability of Population	Stable, close-knit populations have a lower overall crime rate than transient populations. Neighborhoods with more houses and condominiums (generally signifying a more stable population) have a lower crime rate than neighborhoods with mostly apartments (generally a more transient population).	Historically, stabler population west of Harvard Square, more transient population east of Harvard Square. This is changing rapidly.	Lower comparative crime rate in neighborhoods of West Cambridge, Highlands, Peabody, Agassiz, Strawberry Hill. Higher comparative crime rate in Mid-Cambridge, Area 4, Cambridgeport. This, however, is changing with the stabilization and gentrification of housing in these areas. Witness the large drops in crime in 1997 in Mid-Cambridge and Area 4, in 1998 in Mid-Cambridge and North Cambridge.
Street Layout	Areas with major streets offering fast getaways and mass transportation show more crime clusters than neighborhoods with primarily residential streets.	A mix of major and minor streets	Higher auto theft rates in MIT, East Cambridge, Cambridgeport, where thieves can make a quick jump over the bridge to Boston Higher commercial burglary rate in North Cambridge, with multiple avenues of escape into nearby towns
Proximity to Public	Criminals are often indigent and cannot afford	Major public transportation	Contributes to clusters of crime around Central Square, Harvard

Transportation	cars or other expensive forms of transportation. Areas near public transportation, and particularly subways, witness a higher crime rate—particularly robbery and larceny—than more inaccessible areas	system offering high-speed rapid transit throughout most of the city	Square, Porter Square, and Alewife, though not much around Lechmere and Kendall Square. Neighborhoods distant from rapid transit—West Cambridge, Highlands, and Strawberry Hill—show lower crime rate with few clusters.
Economic conditions, including poverty level and unemployment rate	Again, criminals are often indigent. Areas afflicted by poverty show higher burglary, robbery, and larceny rates than Middle-class or wealthy neighborhoods.	Little abject poverty in Cambridge. This factor probably contributes little to the picture of crime in Cambridge.	Possibly some effect on Area 4—the neighborhood with the lowest mean income—though Strawberry Hill, which has the second lowest mean income, also has one of the lowest crime rates in the city. Other factors on this list probably have a much greater role than economic conditions.
Family conditions with respect to divorce and family cohesiveness	Larry J. Siegel, author of <i>Criminology</i> , says: “Family relationships have for some time been considered a major determinant of behavior. Youths who grow up in a household characterized by conflict and tension, where parents are absent or separated, or where there is a lack of familial love and support, will be susceptible to the crime-promoting forces in the environment.”	According to census data, about one third of the families in Cambridge with children are single-parent families. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a whole, this percentage is slightly less—about one quarter.	The neighborhoods with the highest percentage of single-parent families are Area 4, Cambridgeport, Riverside, and North Cambridge. With the exception of Riverside, these neighborhoods also have a higher than mean crime rate. However, there are a far greater number of factors influencing “conflict and tension” and “familial love and support” than just the number of parents in the household. In the end, no conclusions can be drawn without more data.
Climate	Warmer climates and seasons tend to report a higher rate of larceny, auto theft, and juvenile-related crime, while cold seasons and climates report more robberies and murder.	As with the rest of the northeast, a varied climate	High overall larceny, auto theft rate in the Summer Higher overall robbery rate in the winter Burglary rate less tied to climate than to specific weather conditions. Rain and snow produce fewer burglaries
Operational and investigative emphasis of the police department	Problem-oriented, informed police departments have more success controlling certain aspects of crime than other departments.	A problem-oriented department with an emphasis on directed patrol and investigation, and on crime analysis, including quick identification of crime patterns and rapid intervention to curtail them	Lower overall crime rate across the city than would be expected for a city from our size and characteristics
Attitude of the citizenry toward crime, including its reporting practices	Populations that have “given up” on crime and the police experience an exacerbation of the crime problem	A population that works closely with the police, creates numerous neighborhood crime watches, and is likely to report crimes	Lower overall crime rate across the city than would be expected for a city from our size and characteristics